

Editor's Introduction

Harriet Hartman¹

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What a wonderful span of manuscripts we have in this issue. Their geographical span covers Russian immigrants to the United States, a rare look at attitudes towards Jews and Israel among the Iranian public, attitudes about Israel promoted or reinforced in Australian Jewish day schools, cultural perspectives on the Karaite minority group in Israel, and contemporary and historical controversy over the biblical *techelet* (the deep blue thread which Moshe taught the Jewish people to use in the *tallit*, or prayer shawl), familiar to many from the [daily] repetition of this commandment in the basic Jewish prayer of the *Sh'ma*. Not only is the focus on wide-ranging geographical areas of the contemporary Jewish world, but also the transnational dimension of the Jewish community is made clear through actual cases of immigration as well as attitudes toward Israel. Further, the historical context through which understanding is enriched is provided in each of these papers.

There is also a wonderful span of social science methodology in this collection of articles, from the large-scale American Community Survey, to special opinion polls conducted in Iran, to focus group interviews and classroom observations in Australia, to ethnographic research among the Karaites, and historical and contextual analysis related to the “Jewish snail fight.” The richness of these varied methods highlights their special contributions to the understanding of the contemporary Jewish world. Each has its strengths, and each should be pursued in our quest to further our knowledge of dynamics affecting contemporary Jewry.

We continue to provide updates from several research institutions, academic and non-academic, American-based, Israel-based, and virtual (based online)—again reflecting the span of research venues and pursuits enriching social science.

✉ Harriet Hartman
hartman@rowan.edu

¹ Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Rowan University, Glassboro, NJ, USA

Finally let me call your attention to the books reviewed in this issue. Markowitz, Sharot and Shokeid have edited *Toward an Anthropology of Nation Building and Unbuilding in Israel*, the inaugural book in the new ASSJ book series, “The Study of Jews in Societies”, and we are happy to have it as our lead review in this issue of *Contemporary Jewry*. The other three reviews again show the breadth of social science of Jewry, with Goldscheider’s book focusing on Israeli society in the twenty-first century, drawing on many and varied sociological sources; Ferziger’s on the realignment of American Orthodox Judaism; and Kwall’s focusing on (the myth of) the cultural Jew. Don’t forget to check out the books received listed on the inside of the back cover.

Beyond hoping that the range of offerings has something for everyone, I hope you will take the opportunity to read the papers from methodological perspectives, geographical areas, and topics of focus that are not in your traditional comfort zone, stretching your understanding and appreciation of the wide range of social science about contemporary Jewry.

Let me take this opportunity to thank nearly twenty reviewers for contributing their time and expert suggestions, sometimes multiple times as articles underwent revision, as well as the copy-editors, research editor Helen Kim and book review editor Daniel Parmer. It takes a team to produce each issue, and I am grateful for all of your efforts.